

8/31/2009 This Week in Congress

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August 31, 2009

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Health Care Discussion Continues

As I travel the state during the August work period, I have had the opportunity to talk with Kansans about their concerns with the current health care legislation. This week, I discussed my opposition to the legislation during visits to several community hospitals and during town hall meetings I conducted in Smith and Jewell counties. As Chair of the House Rural Health Care Coalition, it is valuable for me to speak with Kansans about their thoughts on this legislation. [Click here to view the list of my upcoming town hall tour stops next month.](#)

Newman Regional Health: On Thursday, I was in Emporia to visit Newman Regional Health Hospital and to tour the facility. For over 87 years, Newman Regional Health has provided healthcare to the people of Lyon County and the surrounding communities. The hospital is a 99 bed facility that is accredited by the Healthcare Facilities Accreditation Program. It is operated on a not-for-profit basis and is supported by donations and payment for services. During my visit,

I toured the new wing of the hospital. I was able to visit with hospital staff and members of the hospital administration about health care reform, the cost of updating health information systems and the importance of recruiting physicians. We also discussed the challenges facing emergency rooms during economic downturns.

Thank you to Bob Driewer, CEO; Holly French, CFO; Julie Stowe, Chief Nursing Officer; Dr. Kendall Wright, family practice physician; and members of the hospital board of Trustees, for speaking with me. Also thank you to Lynn Redeker for inviting me on the tour. [Click here to view photos of my visit.](#)

St. Luke Hospital and Living Center: Later on Thursday, I visited St. Luke Hospital and Living Center in Marion. Originally built in 1911, St. Luke Hospital and Living Center is a Critical Access Hospital that provides general medical and surgical care for inpatient, outpatient, and emergency room patients. The hospital is a member of Banner Health, one of the largest not-for-profit health care providers in the country.

During the tour, I learned that the facility provides outpatient treatment, acute care, long-term care, home care and home medical equipment services to Marion, as well as to the surrounding rural communities in the central part of the state. We also discussed the large renovation-expansion project which will soon be underway. I was able to tour the hospital's laboratory department, the cardiac rehab program, the physician clinic, and the long-term care wing. We stopped into the radiology center and I was able to visit with hospital radiologist, Dr. Joe Prickett.

Thank you to Jeremy Armstrong, CEO/Administrator and Jerry Dieter, District Hospital Board Member for the tour. [Click here to view photos of my visit.](#)

Fiscal Voting Record

This week, I received a 96 percent score from The Club for Growth for my votes to eliminate wasteful spending. The Club for Growth is a fiscally conservative organization that advocates for limited government, lower taxes, less government spending, fair-trade and economic freedom. The group recently released its 2009 RePork Card with scores for Members of the House of Representatives. The scores measured how Members voted on 68 amendments proposed to remove earmarked projects in 12 annual spending bills.

The earmark process must be reformed. The federal government spends frivolously and unnecessary spending has added up to a U.S. deficit in the trillions.

Congress continues to spend money that it does not have, which is costing American taxpayers.

I am strongly opposed to wasteful and unethical government spending. As only one of 17 of the 435 Members of the House of Representatives that has voted against every stimulus and bailout plan, I will continue to find ways to oppose wasteful government spending.

K-State Congressional Agriculture Staff Tour

On Monday, I attended the 2009 Kansas State University Congressional Agriculture Staff Tour. K-State invites agriculture

staff members from the congressional delegation and other representatives from Kansas agriculture to attend this event to demonstrate K-State is conducting agricultural research and other efforts to benefit agriculture producers and enhance agri-business. The tour highlighted research projects focused on air and water quality, water conservation, bioenergy production, wheat genetics, sorghum breeding and biosecurity. It also highlighted K-State's new extension outreach project at Fort Riley. After the tour, a dinner at the newly re-modeled barn at the Konza Prairie Biological Station provided a chance for me and staff to visit one-on-one with the professors conducting the research. I appreciated this opportunity to see how the efforts at KSU help advance agriculture.

Thank you to K-State President, Dr. Kirk Schulz; Dean of Agriculture, Fred Cholick; Government Affairs Director, Sue Peterson; and to all the other K-State staff that made this visit possible.

Talking with Kansas Agriculture Leaders

Anderson County Farm Bureau Annual Meeting: On Wednesday, I traveled to Garnett to speak at the Anderson County Farm Bureau Annual Meeting. During the meeting, I discussed my opposition to both the recently passed Cap and Trade legislation and to the Food Safety bill. Speaking with agriculture leaders helps me learn about what issues are affecting farmers and ranchers in the state. I appreciated the hospitality of the group. Thank you to John Pracht, Board President; Debbie Kueser, Vice President/Women's Chairman; and Charlie Foltz, Secretary/Treasurer. Thank you also to Cindy Ecclefield, County Coordinator, for inviting me to speak.

Agricultural Business Council of Kansas City: I was in Kansas City at American Royal on Friday to speak with the Agricultural Business Council of Kansas City. The council is an association that advocates growth and awareness of the food, fiber, agri-science and related industries in the Kansas City region. During the meeting, I discussed Cap and Trade legislation, the commodity futures markets, indirect land use and biofuels. Thank you to Bob Petersen, Chair of the Council, and all who participated in the discussion.

Touring Hodgdon Plant in Herington

On Tuesday, I visited Hodgdon Powder Company near Delavan. Hodgdon Powder is a manufacturing and distributing company. Over the years the company has become a leader in gunpowder and provides propellants and other products and services to sportsmen and other businesses. I have now visited the Hodgdon Powder Company headquarters in Shawnee Mission and the company's Morris County plant where many Kansans are employed. It was good to tour the plant and talk with staff about issues important to their business. Thank you to Brad Schick, General Manager, for his hospitality during my visit.

Meeting with Economic Development Officials

On Tuesday, I met with economic development officials in Herington. Creating economic development opportunities in Kansas is now more important than ever to our economy. I appreciated speaking with these business and community leaders about potential businesses that may move into Dickinson County.

Thanks to Cindy Roberts, Community Development Coordinator, Herington Economic Development Corporation; Gina Bell, Planning and Zoning Director, Dickinson County Administrator; and Janelle Dockendorf, Budget Director and Economic Development Coordinator.

Speaking at McPherson County United Way Campaign Kickoff

On Thursday, I attended the McPherson County United Way Campaign Kickoff Luncheon. The campaign theme, "Grow by One...\$1 or 1 percent," promotes the idea that a small change in a contribution can make a big difference in McPherson County. During the event, I spoke about the difference each of us can make in our communities and that what we do within our Kansas communities is so important.

Thanks to United Way Director Brenda Sales, Incoming Campaign Chair Kelly Young, Outgoing Campaign Chair Paul Taliaferro and Board President Marla Hawkinson. [Click here to view a photo.](#)

Touring McPherson Opera House

On Thursday, I stopped by the McPherson Opera House to see ongoing renovations being made to the building. The Opera House was saved from destruction in 1986 by, what is now, the McPherson Opera House Company. The National Register of Historic Places has labeled it as "one of the best examples of opera house architecture in Kansas." During my visit, I saw several floors that have been renovated and many parts of the project that are already complete. I was glad to see this historic theatre restored for Kansans to enjoy for generations to come.

Thank you to John Holecek, Executive Director of McPherson Opera House, for inviting me on the tour. [Click here to view photos from my visit.](#) [Click here to view a photo.](#)

Attending 19th Annual Blue Valley Educational Foundation's Community Breakfast for Champions

On Friday, I attended the 19th Annual Blue Valley Educational Foundation's Community Breakfast for Champions in Overland Park. The Blue Valley Educational Foundation was created in 1990 to help assist the needs of the students in the school district through teacher grants and supplemental programs. It works to provide resources to teachers so that they may provide students with outstanding educational opportunities.

Every Kansas student should have access to a safe classroom environment, highly-qualified teachers and appropriate school supplies. Congress must be careful not to pass mandates that restrict educational priorities at the state and local levels. States need to have the authority to set licensing requirements and standards for their own teachers and education professionals.

I was glad to have the opportunity to listen to Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Tom Trigg, and University of Kansas Coach, Bill Self, speak at the event.

Mourning the Loss of Ora Switzer

One of Kansas' oldest residents, Ora Switzer of Nicodemus, passed away Sunday, August 23, at the age of 106. Ora was born in the all-African-American community of Nicodemus and lived most of her life there. She was known by many in Graham County for her kindness and welcoming spirit. Ora will be missed by all who were blessed to know her. My thoughts and prayers are with her family and those in Nicodemus who have lost a special member of their community.

Talking with Kansans in Junction City

I was in Junction City Tuesday morning to visit with residents and learn about what is happening in the community. During my visit, I spoke with folks at City Hall, Junction City and Geary County Economic Development, Central National Bank and the Junction City Daily Union. Also while in town, I stopped at KJCK Radio and talked with News Director Dewey Terrill about the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) and Fort Riley. There are currently more than 16,000 soldiers stationed at Fort Riley, which is up from around 9,000 in 2005. I joined County Commissioner Florence Whitebread on the KJCK radio program "Your Town".

Attending Funeral Services for Sid Warner

On Wednesday, I attended the funeral services for Sidney (Sid) Warner of Cimarron. Sid was a man who wore many hats but his heart always remained in ranching. He owned and managed Warner Ranches and Warner Feedyard, among other businesses. During his life, he contributed to his community and state by serving on the Kansas Board of Regents, as former president of the Santa Fe Trail Council, on the governor's animal health board, as community affairs manager for the Kansas Department of Transportation and by advising the Kansas Geological Survey, among other things. I am thankful to have known Sid and to call him my friend. My thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Thelma, and their family.

In the Office

David Pope of Topeka stopped by my office to visit this week.

Several Kansans visited my Washington, D.C., office to receive a tour of the United States Capitol, including Leland and Sandy Woodson of Hutchinson, Tom and Kathy Brown of McPherson, Doug and Tammy Stefek of Ellsworth and Morgan Shoaff of Hays.

Very truly yours,

Jerry